

CLAIMS

1. A process for the production of light-colored fatty acid alkanolamide polyalkylene glycol ethers by addition of alkylene oxides onto fatty acid alkanolamides in the presence of alkaline catalysts, characterized in that the alkoxylation is carried out in the presence of reducing agents and the reaction products obtained in this way are subjected to a treatment with steam under alkaline conditions.

2. A process as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the fatty acid alkanolamides used correspond to formula (I):



where R^1CO is a linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated acyl group containing 6 to 22 carbon atoms and 0 or 1 to 3 double bonds, R^2 is a hydroxyalkyl group containing 2 to 4 carbon atoms and R^3 is hydrogen or has the same meaning as R^2 .

3. A process as claimed in claims 1 and/or 2, characterized in that ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, butylene oxide or mixtures thereof are used as the alkylene oxide.

4. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the fatty acid alkanolamides and the alkylene oxides are used in a molar ratio of 1:1 to 1:25.

5. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the alkaline catalysts are used in quantities of 0.1 to 5% by weight, based on the starting materials.

6. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that sodium borohydride, hypophosphorous acid or alkali metal salts thereof are used as the reducing agent.

7. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 6, characterized

in that the reducing agents are used in quantities of 0.1 to 2.5% by weight, based on the starting materials.

8. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that the alkoxylation is carried out at temperatures of 80 to 150°C.
- 5 9. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that the alkoxylation is carried out under pressures of 1 to 10 bar.
10. A process as claimed in at least one of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that the treatment with steam is carried out at a pH value of 9 to 12.